

**WILLIAM
WYMARK
JACOBS**

HIS OTHER SELF

William Wymark Jacobs

His Other Self

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W. W. Jacobs

His Other Self / Night Watches, Part 10

HIS OTHER SELF

"They're as like as two peas, him and 'is brother," said the night- watchman, gazing blandly at the indignant face of the lighterman on the barge below; "and the on'y way I know this one is Sam is because Bill don't use bad langwidge. Twins they are, but the likeness is only outside; Bill's 'art is as white as snow."

He cut off a plug of tobacco, and, placing it in his cheek, waited expectantly.

"White as snow," he repeated.

"That's me," said the lighterman, as he pushed his unwieldy craft from the jetty. "I'll tell Sam your opinion of 'im. So long."

The watchman went a shade redder than usual. That's twins all over, he said, sourly, always deceiving people. It's Bill arter all, and, instead of hurting 'is feelings, I've just been flattering of 'im up.

It ain't the fust time I've 'ad trouble over a likeness. I've been a twin myself in a manner o' speaking. It didn't last long, but it lasted long enough for me to always be sorry for twins, and to make a lot of allowance for them. It must be very 'ard to have another man going about with your face on 'is shoulders, and getting it into trouble.

It was a year or two ago now. I was sitting one evening at the gate, smoking a pipe and looking at a newspaper I 'ad found in the office, when I see a gentleman coming along from the swing-bridge. Well-dressed, clean-shaved chap 'e was, smoking a cigarette. He was walking slow and looking about 'im casual-like, until his eyes fell on me, when he gave a perfect jump of surprise, and, arter looking at me very 'ard, walked on a little way and then turned back. He did it twice, and I was just going to say something to 'im, something that I 'ad been getting ready for 'im, when he spoke to me.

"Good evening," he ses.

"Good evening," I ses, folding the paper over and looking at 'im rather severe.

"I hope you'll excuse me staring," he ses, very perlite; "but I've never seen such a face and figger as yours in all my life—never."

"Ah, you ought to ha' seen me a few years ago," I ses. "I'm like everybody else—I'm getting on."

"Rubbish!" he ses. "You couldn't be better if you tried. It's marvellous! Wonderful! It's the very thing I've been looking for. Why, if you'd been made to order you couldn't ha' been better."

I thought at fust he was by way of trying to get a drink out o' me—I've been played that game afore—but instead o' that he asked me whether I'd do 'im the pleasure of 'aving one with 'im.

We went over to the Albion, and I believe I could have 'ad it in a pail if I'd on'y liked to say the word. And all the time I was drinking he was looking me up and down, till I didn't know where to look, as the saying is.

"I came down 'ere to look for somebody like you," he ses, "but I never dreamt I should have such luck as this. I'm an actor, and I've got to play the part of a sailor, and I've been worried some time 'ow to make up for the part. D'ye understand?"

"No," I ses, looking at 'im.

"I want to look the real thing," he ses, speaking low so the landlord shouldn't hear. "I want to make myself the living image of you. If that don't fetch 'em I'll give up the stage and grow cabbages."

"Make yourself like me?" I ses. "Why, you're no more like me than I'm like a sea-sick monkey."

"Not so much," he ses. "That's where the art comes in."

He stood me another drink, and then, taking my arm in a cuddling sort o' way, and calling me "Dear boy," 'e led me back to the wharf and explained. He said 'e would come round next evening with wot 'e called his make-up box, and paint 'is face and make 'imself up till people wouldn't know one from the other.

"And wot about your figger?" I ses, looking at 'im.

"A cushion," he ses, winking, "or maybe a couple. And what about clothes? You'll 'ave to sell me those you've got on. Hat and all. And boots."

I put a price on 'em that I thought would 'ave finished 'im then and there, but it didn't. And at last, arter paying me so many more compliments that they began to get into my 'ead, he fixed up a meeting for the next night and went off.

"And mind," he ses, coming back, "not a word to a living soul!"

He went off agin, and, arter going to the Bull's Head and 'aving a pint to clear my 'ead, I went and sat down in the office and thought it over. It seemed all right to me as far as I could see; but p'r'aps the pint didn't clear my 'ead enough—p'r'aps I ought to 'ave 'ad two pints.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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